

The context for the study

The Civic Integration Abroad Act (Wib)

The Dutch Civic Integration Abroad Act (*Wet inburgering buitenland*, or Wib) came into force on March 15th 2006. The aim of the Wib is to make sure that immigrants already have a basic knowledge of the Dutch language and Dutch society before they arrive in the Netherlands. This should enable the process of integration to take place more efficiently and more effectively.

The Wib applies to all foreign nationals who are newcomers in the sense of the Dutch Integration of Newcomers Act (*Wet inburgering nieuwkomers*, or Win) and who require an authorisation for temporary stay (*machtiging tot voorlopig verblijf* or mvv) before being allowed to enter the Netherlands. These are foreign nationals from non-Western countries who wish to settle in the Netherlands to join their partner or family or to take up a position as a religious leader. The Wib adds an extra condition that needs to be satisfied before an authorisation for temporary stay can be issued: the applicant needs to have passed a basic examination testing knowledge of the Dutch language and Dutch society. The basic examination takes place via a telephone directly connected to a computer and is taken at an embassy or consulate.

The aims of the statutory assessment of the Wib

On introduction of the Wib the then Minister for Immigration and Integration announced that an extensive statutory assessment of the Act was planned to ascertain the effectiveness of the Act. The problem definition for the statutory assessment of the Wib can be formulated as follows:

- (a) To what extent do individuals who were subject to the requirements of the Wib perform more effectively in the integration programme in the Netherlands compared to reference groups, as a result of their greater knowledge of the Dutch language and society?
- (b) To what extent do individuals who were subject to the requirements of the Wib integrate more quickly after completing the integration programme, compared with reference groups?

There are four main research questions in the statutory assessment of the Wib:

- (a) How does the Wib work in practice?
- (b) To what extent does the Wib function as a selection mechanism with regard to the inflow of foreign nationals?
- (c) What effect does the Wib have on newcomers taking the integration programme?

- (d) What effect does the Wib have on the further integration of newcomers after completing the integration programme?

Only chapter 6 of this report deals with the statutory assessment of the Wib.

The aims of the short-term assessment of the Wib

A decision was made to carry out a short-term assessment of the Wib prior to the statutory assessment. That short-term assessment is the subject of this study. It is not customary to carry out a short-term assessment prior to a statutory assessment, but this approach offers many advantages such as the opportunity to carry out baseline measurements and to test out possible approaches for the statutory assessment. The objectives of the short-term assessment are:

- (a) To carry out a study of the short-term results of the Wib, that is:
- (i) The performance of the Wib in the first 15 months;
 - (ii) The effect of the Wib on the inflow of immigrants in the first 15 months;
 - (iii) The effect of the Wib on the level of competence in the Dutch language of newcomers at the start of the integration programme in the Netherlands;
 - (iv) A baseline measurement of the language competence levels of newcomers on completion of the integration programme in the Netherlands.
- (b) To develop a research plan for the statutory assessment of the Wib two years after the introduction of the Wib and any subsequent assessments.

Chapters 2 to 5 of this report deal with the results of the short-term assessment.

Research approach

Two reference groups were used

A successful effect analysis requires reference groups to be defined that closely resemble the new arrivals in the sense of the Wib (hereafter called 'Wib newcomers') in all ways except for the fact that they did not take the Wib examination. Two potential reference groups are used in this study:

- (a) Immigrants who are newcomers in the sense of the Win and who require an mvv before being allowed to enter the Netherlands, but who submitted an application for an mvv before the Wib came into force. This reference group consists primarily of immigrants who entered the Netherlands to join or rejoin their family. For the sake of brevity we will call this group 'pre-Wibbers';
- (b) Immigrants who are covered by the Win or the Dutch Integration Act (*Wet inburgering*, or Wi) but who do not need an mvv to enter the Netherlands. For the most part these are former asylum seekers, however this reference group also includes the small group of

newcomers who come from countries where the mvv requirement does not apply. For the sake of brevity we will call this group 'former asylum seekers'.

In principle the pre-Wibbers will be used as the reference group for the effect analysis as they provide the best comparison. However the Wi¹ also plays a role when considering the effect on language competence levels on completion of the integration programme and when considering the effect on further integration. Pre-Wibbers are not affected by the Wi whereas most Wib newcomers are affected by this Act. This short-term assessment looks at whether the makeup of the group of former asylum seekers is sufficiently similar to that of the pre-Wibbers and Wib newcomers to be used in comparisons.

Different measurement methods for the different research questions

Data were collected in the short-term assessment on the performance of the Wib and the effect of the Wib on immigrant inflows and on language competence levels at the start of the integration programme. In addition a baseline measurement was made of the level of language competence on completion of the integration programme in the Netherlands. The short-term assessment generally made use of recorded data, with the exception of the measurement of the level of language competence on starting the integration programme. Here the researchers carried out their own measurements of language competence levels using a random sample of newcomers.

¹ The Wi came into force on January 1 2007. Some of the new aspects of the Wi are a maximum term for passing the integration exam and requirements regarding the minimum grade that that needs to be obtained in the exam.

Subject	Measurement method	Sample	
		Baseline measurement	Measurement of effect
Functioning of the Wib in practice	Collection of data on the basic exam from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. The data is for the most part also incorporated in the MIEB monitor (monitor of the Wib exam).	Not applicable	All foreign nationals who took the basic exam in the first 15 months after the introduction of the Wib.
Immigrant inflow	Collection of data on mvv applications from the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND).	All mvv applications in the years prior to the introduction of the Wib.	All mvv applications in the first 15 months after the introduction of the Wib.
The start of the integration programme in the Netherlands	A measurement of verbal language competence levels using the PhonePass test.	A selection of about 15 municipalities and a sample of 300 individuals from among the pre-Wibbers who register for the integration programme in those municipalities.	A selection of about 15 municipalities and a sample of 300 individuals from among the Wib-newcomers who register for the integration programme in those municipalities.
Completion of the integration programme in the Netherlands	Collection of data from the municipalities on the integration exam.	A selection of about 15 municipalities and a sample of pre-Wibbers (at least 1,000 individuals) and former asylum seekers (at least 300 individuals) who completed their integration programme (Win) in those municipalities in 2004, 2005 or the first half of 2006.	To be carried out in the statutory assessment.

The short-term assessment findings

More than 6,000 people took the Wib exam and 88% passed

A total of 6,122 people took the Wib exam in the first 15 months to June 2007, with 6,503 exams being taken. There were also 381 retakes. The number of exams was low in the first few months following the introduction of the Wib. As of October 2006 a stable situation seems to have arisen with about 550 exams per month.

88% of all participants passed the exam, 10% failed and there was as yet no definite result for 2% of the participants. The exam result is related to the level of education, gender and the country of origin of the participant; on average, men and the more educated achieve better results than women and the less educated, whereas people from countries that do not use Indo-European languages generally achieve lower scores.

Immigrant inflows dropped sharply after the Wib came into force

There were about 1,500 to 2,000 mvv applications a month prior to the introduction of the Wib, in the period from 2002 to the start of 2006. There was a reduction during this period in the percentage of applications that were granted and this reduction was particularly marked for applicants from Turkey and Morocco (roughly one third of the applicants come from one of these two countries). The fall occurred mainly from the end of 2004, possibly as a result of a tightening of the rules regarding the immigration of family members which took place in November 2004.

The introduction of the Wib on March 15th 2006 led to a sharp drop in the number of mvv applications in the first month. The number of applications subsequently rose again gradually to just under 1,000 applications a month from the end of 2006. Moroccans and Turks showed the biggest fall in the number of applications. The age and gender profiles of applicants remained unchanged, and the Wib did not appear to have had a strong effect on the percentage of applications which were granted.

The sharp drop in the immigrant inflow from March 15th 2006 onwards is evidence for a selection mechanism; as a result of the Wib, fewer foreign nationals are choosing to emigrate to the Netherlands to (re)join their families and that effect is strongest among Turks and Moroccans. Given the high percentage of passes in the Wib exam that was noted earlier, it would appear that the exam itself does not function directly as a selection mechanism. The drop in immigrant inflows does not seem to be a temporary effect as the monthly inflows have remained roughly constant from the second half of 2006; moreover this is also the case for the number of Wib exams.

No usable results from the effect measurement of language competence levels on starting the integration programme

The language competence levels of 175 newcomers were measured for the baseline measurement of language competence levels at the start of the integration programme. A total of 60% of these pre-Wibbers achieved the A1-min level or higher (A1-min is the minimum level needed to pass the Wib exam). Differences between newcomers in language levels can primarily be explained by the number of years in education and whether or not the newcomer speaks Dutch at home.

It was only possible to measure the language competence levels of 22 people in the effect measurement. This number is too small to allow the results to be reported. This low response is mainly the result of the situation surrounding the Wi. The measurement was carried out on newcomers who registered with the municipality for the integration programme; however, relatively few Wib newcomers were called up to register by the municipalities in 2007 due to problems with the implementation of the Wi and to the expectation that municipalities and newcomers had of changes in the Wi rules. Ultimately the effect measurement could only be carried out in four municipalities.

Around 30% of the pre-Wibbers achieved a language level of A1-min or lower on completing the integration programme

The baseline measurement of the language competence levels of the pre-Wibbers on completing the integration programme showed that around 30% achieved level NT2 0 (the equivalent of the A1-min level or lower). The language result depended in part on the country of origin (participants from Turkey or Morocco achieved lower levels) and the level of education (the less educated participants achieved lower levels).

A comparison of the language results of pre-Wibbers with the language results of former asylum seekers shows that former asylum seekers achieved higher levels. The two groups also show big differences in their characteristics. Pre-Wibbers tended to be younger, tended more often to be female and came from different countries. The conclusion is that former asylum seekers cannot be used as a reference group for the measurement of the Wib effect on integration programme results and the further integration of Wib newcomers.

A plan for the statutory assessment

The objective of the statutory assessment and subsequent assessments is to provide an answer to the following research questions:

- (a) How does the Wib work in practice?
- (b) To what extent does the Wib function as a selection mechanism with regard to the inflows of foreign nationals?
- (c) What effect does the Wib have on newcomers following the integration programme?
- (d) What effect does the Wib have on the further integration of newcomers after completing the integration programme?

Study the performance of the Wib using an extension of the approach in the short-term assessment

An approach is proposed for the study of the performance of the Wib that is an extension of the approach in the short-term assessment. In addition to the collection of data on the basic exam, research should be done into the implementation and operational costs of the Wib. Furthermore, a survey with a written questionnaire should be held among the embassies and consulates to obtain information not to be found in recorded data.

Maintain the short-term assessment approach for research into a selection mechanism

The proposal is to use the same approach as for the short-term assessment, whereby Immigration and Naturalisation Service records of immigrant inflows are analysed.

Repeat the direct measurement of language competence levels and analyse the results of the Wib exam and the Wi exam for the effect on the integration programme

A repeat of the effect measurement which was carried out in the short-term assessment is proposed as a means of determining the effect of the Wib on language competence levels at the start of the integration programme. A (substantially) higher response can be expected thanks to the changes in the implementation of the Wi whereby municipalities are now permitted to provide Wib newcomers with an integration programme; they will therefore be calling up Wib newcomers for registration in large numbers.

The possibilities for carrying out an effect measurement of language competence levels on completion of the integration programme are severely limited. The introduction of the Wi at the

start of 2007 means that it is not possible to make an unbiased comparison between the language competence levels of pre-Wibbers and the language competence levels of Wib newcomers. However it is possible to test whether the scores in the Wib exam are correlated with the scores in the Wi exam.

Research the relationship between the Wib exam results and integration indicators

The further integration of Wib newcomers is expressed in terms of opportunity and risk indicators for participation in the labour market and dependence on social security. There are two options.

The first option is to link the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) files containing data on social security and participation in the labour market with IND files of mvv applications and Ministry of Foreign Affairs files containing the Wib exam scores. Then an analysis is carried out to test whether a higher Wib score is associated with more successful integration.

The disadvantage of this option is that the information takes some time to become available; the Statistics Netherlands files describe the situation two years previously. An alternative option is to hold a questionnaire among Wib newcomers after they have completed the Wi exam. This option would provide information more quickly, however it is also more expensive.

Postponement of the statutory assessment and preparatory measures are recommended

The original intention was to carry out the statutory assessment in 2008, two years after the Wib came into force. However we recommend postponing the statutory assessment to 2010 at the earliest. In 2008, it will only be possible to make very limited statements about the effect of the Wib on the integration programme and further integration given the time it takes to complete the mvv application procedure and then follow an integration programme.

In addition, we recommend modifying the registration systems of the IND and the IB-Groep (Information Administration Group responsible for the administration of the Wi exam) in such a way that it will be possible in the statutory assessment to combine their files using a unique number. Furthermore, we would advise the client to come to an agreement with the municipalities prior to the statutory assessment in order to guarantee their cooperation in the direct measurement of language competence levels at the start of the integration programme.